(b) whether DRI has also found abnormalities and foul play in documents of the firms as a *prima facie* manipulation of the expiry date and prices; and

(c) if so, whether the above firms are restricted/banned/blacklisted for the time being and not allowed to export ever after lifting of the ban?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Necessary proceedings under the FT(DR) Act, 1992 against the above firms have been initiated.

**Head count of religious communities**

4473. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Army refused to give information regarding head count of religious communities in armed forces;

(b) if so, what are the reasons cited for refusal; and

(c) whether sharing information will harm the nation in any way?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Armed Forces have a secular and a political character. Recruitment to the Forces is based on merit and is open to every citizen of the country without any discrimination on the basis of their caste, creed, religion or region. All the personnel from all communities and regions work together without any distinction on the basis of caste, creed or religion. Therefore, it was not considered desirable to supply any data relating to particular religious community in respect of the Army as it would have affected the ethos and cohesiveness of the forces.

**Status of Defence canteen employees**

4474. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the existing Defence canteens and the number of employees in each of these canteens;

(b) whether it is a fact that the employees of defence canteens under this Ministry are treated as casual employees, and not as Central Government employees;

(c) whether the Jodhpur Central Administrative Tribunal had declared in 1994 the Defence canteen employees as Central Government staff and the Supreme Court also had declared them as Central Government Staff *vide* its order in the Civil Appeal No. 1039-40, 1999; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and what is the reason for delay in implementing the orders?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) There are at present 3692 Unit Run Canteens (URCs) functioning in different formations/units of the three services and other organizations. As per reports received from the services, there are about 2300 employees working in these Unit Run Canteens. In the case filed by Mohd. Aslam & others, CAT, Jodhpur ordered for treating civilian workers of URCs as Government employees. In the appeal filed by Government against the CAT order, the Supreme Court held in 2001 that such workers could be treated as Government employees which however, *ipso facto* would not entitle them to get all service benefits as is available to regular Government servant or even their counterparts serving in CSD canteens and separate rules could be framed regulating their terms and conditions of service. While the Government had different views on status of URC employees as Government servants, separate terms and conditions were prescribed for employees of Unit Run Canteens. In another subsequent SLP (Civil) No. 8586 of 2003 filed by Shri R.R. Pillai, the Supreme Court decided to reconsider the decision taken in the case of Union of India *Vs.* Mohd Aslam. The matter is at present *sub-judice*.

**Overstay of armed forces personnel at IDSA**

4475. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of research projects completed by serving armed forces personnel under the Fellowship Scheme at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis since September, 2000 onwards, till date;